



A Layman's Enjoyment of Bird Life

Our summer home is in a secluded ravine on the edge of the little California town of Shasta. We are in the foothills of the Coast Range at an elevation of 1049 feet. Many oak, digger-pine and locust trees provide ample homes for a great variety of bird life. An abandoned orchard, some open weedy fields, and near-by manzanita thickets offer a variety of food. Several bird baths are in continual use on our place. We feel as if we were living in a bird sancturay for no one molests our premises or the neighborhood.

The feathered denizens attracted here often stage amusing, interesting, and occasionally tragic performances.

Upon our return the past spring the many jays living in our oaks resented our intrusion into the privacy of our own back yard. A pair of Hooting owls live in two hollows in one of these oaks and sit there nearly all day long looking like figurines in niches. All birds, especially the jays, scold them when they spy them there, but the owls remain models of imperturbability in spite of all the chattering and shrieking. A pair of mocking birds have nested in the largest oak. The male perches upon the topmost branch where he whistles and sings during the morning hours. This family is a welcome addition to our tree-top choruses. The kingbirds, tyrants of the air, as usual have nested in a large white oak. They always seem spoiling for a fight. No other birds have the temerity to search for living quarters there. If any do pause to rest in this tree they are fortunate indeed to escape with their flying apparatus unimpaired.

Our thrashers are very shy, spending most of the day under cover of the surrounding manzanita bushes. They are sedulous scratchers, rustling the dry leaves in search of insects. They are early morning carolers, generally broad-casting from the tree-tops. The ash-throated fly-catchers nest in the hallows of the oaks. The tit-mice are ever present with their "tu-whits, tu-whits" and we admire their quiet and industrious ways. These birds and the nuthatches certainly give the insects a run for their lives.

We are thankful that the quail are plentiful again this year. They, too, resented our interference with their privacy. Blackbirds nest in some old pear trees in an abandoned orchard across the road and keep strictly to themselves. They seem suspicious of my intentions as I pass by, following me along overhead. The California woodpeckers draw acorns and pine-nuts from their winter stores. They select a dry oak limb or the top of an electric light pole upon

which to crack these open. The house-finches are forever bursting into song, which sounds like a spontaneous expression of sheer happiness. In seeking a suitable selection for home building they generally choose a site near the orchard where they can keep a weather eye on the ripening fruit. The goldfinches come and go in large flocks. They seem to be taking a census of the various weed crops for the seeds they will consume later on.

The meadow-larks and song sparrows softly phrase their songs as they perch on posts or fence rails. The larks seem to shun habitations. The California towhees and the hermit thrushes, both quiet and peace-loving birds, peck around unobtrusively under the garden shrubbery in search of food. The killdeer flutter along near the ground in the meadow, uttering their plaintive and apparently discontented cries. Barnswallows are forever skimming through the air, darting hither and yon, in their continuous quest for insect food.

Occasionally a hawk casts its ominous shadow over the landscape. Instantly alarms are sounded and all becomes "quiet along the Western front" as the birds go into hiding. Finally an all-clear is sounded and activity is resumed until the close of day, when the night-hawks, owls, and bats take over.

Tomorrow is another day and we know we shall again awaken to the matins of the birds. We often resolve to emulate their happiness even if we are not able to compete with them in joyful pleasant song.

JOSEPH L. BLUMB, *Spring of 1945.*

Bird Census at Benicia, California

Benicia, Solano County, California (same area as in 1933 and several subsequent years; observers traveling together by automobile with frequent stops to canvass the marsh and live-oak hill area along highway between Benicia and Cordelia, these towns being fourteen miles apart). Benicia waterfront 20%, marsh 25%, open fields 15%, hills 40%.—Dec. 30; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Clear, following two weeks of rain; wind E., 1-5 m.p.h.; temp. 47-56 F. Total hours 16 (15 on foot, 1 by car); total miles, 46 (28 by car, 18 on foot).

Western grebe, 4; California heron, 1; American egret, 12; Brewster egret, 90; black-crowned night heron, 6; American bittern, 1; pintail, 8; green-winged teal, 2; shoveller, 70; canvasback, 300 (est.); lesser scaup duck, 40; ruddy duck, 195; turkey vulture, 1; red-tailed hawk, 10; marsh hawk, 1; sparrow hawk, 28; coot, 2000 (est.); killdeer, 75; greater yellow-legs, 17; glaucous winged gull, 82; western gull, 150; California gull, 18; Bonaparte gull, 23; Anna hummingbird, 1; red-shafted flicker, 78; black phoebe, 1; Say phoebe, 1; California jay, 42; plain tit-mouse, 4; bush-tit, 15; mockingbird, 1; robin, 800 (est.); hermit thrush, 7; western bluebird, 8; mountain bluebird, 69; gnat-catcher, 1; ruby-crowned kinglet, 17; pipit, 16; cedar waxwing, 174; California shrike, 23; Hutton vireo, 1; Audubon warbler, 205; house sparrow, 75; meadowlark, 300 (est.); red-winged blackbird, 135; Brewer blackbird, 4000 (est.); house finch, 210; willow goldfinch, 1100 (est.); green-backed goldfinch, 5; spotted towhee, 14; lark sparrow, 7; junco, 18; Nuttall sparrow, 95; golden-crowned sparrow, 45; song sparrow, 68.

TOTAL, 55 species; about 10670 individuals.

The scarcity or absence of certain species of shore and water birds which had been observed on previous censuses in this area was due primary to high flood waters from the central valleys following two weeks of almost incessant rains.

—EMERSON A. STONER, J. DUNCAN GRAHAM.—*Dec. 30, 1945.*

February Meeting

The 341st meeting of the Association was held on February 14, the president, Miss Jean Bradford Fay, presiding.

Miss Minnie Young reported on possible places of meeting in the East Bay area. Field observations were given by Miss Fay and Miss MacIver.

Mr. R. W. Storer, assistant in Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California, presented the program. He spoke on "Some Observations of Diving Birds", illustrating his lecture with bird skins.

Thirty-five members and guests were present.

MONICA GOEN, *Recording Secretary.*

February Field Trip

The February field trip started at El Camino Real and Easton Drive in Burlingame, covered part of the residential area including the Fagan Estate, then up Easton Drive to the Skyline Boulevard and ended with observations along the San Andreas Lake. On leaving San Francisco the weather looked foreboding, but the day was only partly cloudy, cool and calm.

Mr. Arthur Myer led the party. Two points of interest were noted on the trip. A chestnut-backed Chickadee was making a hole in a rotten stump for its nest by pulling loose bits of rotten wood, then flying to drop them away from the stump. An Anna Hummingbird's nest was found on the branch of an oak tree, when the bird was seen feeding its young, of which there were two.

The following birds were seen, forty two species in all:

Pied-Billed Grebe	Chestnut-Backed Chickadee	English Sparrow
Coot	Plain Titmouse	Western Meadowlark
Killdeer	Bush Tit	Brewer Blackbird
Glaucous-Winged Gull	Wren Tit	California Purple Finch
Western Gull	Western Robin	House Finch
Ring-Billed Gull	Western Bluebird	Pine Siskin
Red-Tailed Hawk	Varied Thrush	Greened-Backed Goldfinch
Sparrow Hawk	Hermit Thrush	Spotted Towhee
California Quail	Ruby-Crowned Kinglet	Brown Towhee
Anna Hummingbird	Cedar Waxwing	Oregon Junco
Hairy Woodpecker	Cassin Vireo	Nuttall Sparrow
Red-Shafted Flicker	Hutton Vireo	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Black Phoebe	Audubon Warbler	Fox Sparrow
California Jay	Townsend Warbler	Song Sparrow

The seventeen members on the trip were Mesdames Anable, Baer, Bozant, Fairbanks, Stowell; Mr. and Mrs. Dubois; Misses Fay, Goen, Papina, Roscoe, Sterne, Young; Messrs. Cochrun, Heyneman, Leffler, Myer. Six visitors were present.

JEAN M. F. DUBOIS, *Historian.*

Note from Audubon Club of Napa:—

Mrs. Esther S. Henrie of the Audubon Club of Napa, California, sends word of an early observation of Violet-green Swallows on January 27 this year, three weeks earlier than in 1945, in the Los Amigos District of Napa County.

In Memoriam— We are sorry to announce the recent death of one of our members, Mr. Charles S. Cushing, on January 7, 1946. Mr. Cushing joined our Association in May, 1919.

March Meeting

The 342nd meeting of the Audubon Association of the Pacific occurs Thursday, March 14, at 7:30 P. M., in the Assembly Room of the San Francisco Library at Larkin and McAllister Streets. Mr. Bert C. Walker, who has charge of the Junior Museum in San Francisco, is to present four of his Junior Scientists in a talk about their activities which will include nature study; geology and the collection and polishing of stones; fluorescent lighting of stones; and model airplanes, showing wing structure in relation to air-plane structure.

March Field Trip

Will occur on Sunday, March 17. The destination is the vicinity of Mills

College. Members and friends from San Francisco take bus N. at Terminal at 8:55 a.m. Get off at Seminary and MacArthur Boulevard about 9:40 a.m. Rest of party meet there also. Bring lunch and binoculars.

DONALD BROCK, *Leader*.

Notices

We are glad to announce the return to the Bay area of our friends, Mr. and Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds.

A few weeks ago another friend, Mr. C. A. (Bert) Harwell, showed his beautiful new films of the Florida Everglades, Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, and lake district in Wisconsin, to the Northbrae Women's Club in Berkeley.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Miss Jean Bradford Fay.....	1150 Filbert St., San Francisco 9
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco 4
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Editor.....	Miss Clelia A. Paroni.....	575 Vincente Ave., Berkeley 6

Monthly meetings second Thursday, 7:30 p. m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Sts., San Francisco

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year

Life memberships, \$50.00

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer
